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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/30/2034

TAGS: AS PINR PREL ZR

SUBJECT: REPORTING ON INTERNATIONAL REACTION TO, AND VIEWS
ON, POTENTIAL U.S.-IRAN ENGAGEMENT

REF: STATE 25892

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR JAMES F. COLE. REASON: 1.4 (c) and (d)

1.(C/NF) Post's senior USIC Reps discussed Ref message during a 24 March 2009 biweekly meeting. Reps were present from CIA, NSA, NRO, NGA, FBI, DIA, and the State Department. By way of background, the USIC's primary Australian counterparts on matters involving Iran include the National Security Advisor, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS), Office of National Assessments (ONA), Defence Intelligence Organization (DIO), Defence Signals Directorate (DSD), Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), Defence Imagery and Geospatial Organisation (DIGO), Office of the Undersecretary of Defence for Intelligence (aDoD USDI), and the Defence Science and Technology Organisation (DSTO).

¶2. (C/NF) Following is a summary of USIC observations, based on their regular engagement on Iran:

(S/NOFORN) The Australian Intelligence Community (AIC) has increased its collection and analytic efforts on Iran over the past decade, demonstrating Australia's strategic commitment to engage substantively as a significant US partner on Iran. Given the USIC's broad engagement across the AIC, we can say with high confidence that the Government of Australia and the AIC will pose no specific objections to efforts by the United States to increase its level of engagement with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

¶3. (S/NF) While Australian troops remain stationed in Afghanistan and Iraq, we predict the Australians will look to increased US engagement with Iran to improve upon creating a realistic framework for an accelerated reduction and eventual cessation of Iranian support to the Taliban, al-Qa'ida and related groups, and Hizballah. Simultaneously, Australia will look for increased US-Iranian engagement to lead to a more stable governance environment for Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and the Levant. We assess that the AIC and GOA will have the patience to take a long-view on these hard topics.

¶4. (S/NF) The AIC's leading concerns with respect to Iran's nuclear ambitions center on understanding the time frame of a possible weapons capability, and working with the United States to prevent Israel from independently launching uncoordinated military strikes against Iran. They are immediately concerned that Iran's pursuit of nuclear capabilities would lead to a conventional war-or even nuclear exchange-in the Middle East involving the United States that would draw Australia into a conflict. Canberra is more broadly concerned about the potential for renewed nuclear proliferation in the Middle East, driving Southeast Asian states to abandon the NPT and pursue their own nuclear capabilities-which could introduce a direct threat to the Australian homeland.

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